Editorial Foreword

IMPERIALISM. Imperialism implies social relationships and forms of political organization so important and so recurrent in history that the concept itself has for centuries inspired comparative study. Even the fact of its multiple meanings has been the object of research which, whatever its other achievements, has still not stripped the term of its evocative power—a power used polemically by critics to reveal dominance disguised yet also proudly sought by hundreds of rulers. The two essays in this issue, both of which surprise the reader by the range of their comparisons, attack the topic quite differently. Robert Hind approaches the British empire in familiar terms, its institutional coherence spread across diverse societies. Such a beginning has often led to admiring discussion of the flexibility of England's unwritten constitution, but Hind takes a different course. Step by step he shows how imperial institutions and practices reflected domestic stratification and structure, and how the empire responded to and sought out similar relationships of labor and landholding wherever it touched. The coherent interaction between Britain and empire shaped a culture of dominance at home and abroad of such similarity that ultimately the rejection of that culture was also marked by similarities and mutual influence. This perspective on the British empire invites a further look, as the best comparison always should, at each element the comparison contains—at this empire compared to others (Smith, *CSSH*, 20:1, compares the British and French empires), at individual parts of the empire (note the related themes in Fenwick on separatism in Quebec, 23:2; Vickery on South Africa, 16:3; Wilkie on Australia, 19:1), at the role of missionaries (Beidelman, Rigby, Schieffelin, and Shapiro in 23:1), at colonial armies (Ness and Stahl, 19:1) and even education (Camic, 25:1), as well as British society itself (Newby, 17:2; McLaren, 18:2; and Appleby, 20:2).

William Adams makes a comparison among empires when there can have been no influence, squeezing from the archaeological evidence left by two thousand years of Egyptian empire signs that there were stages of development which have suggestive counterparts in European imperialism over the last five hundred years. In this, his study recalls classic works by Schumpeter and Eisenstadt, comparisons of the British and Roman empires (Brunt, 7:3; Strayer, 9:1), and imperialism's internal dynamism modelled for the modern period by Smith and Modelski (20:2). The modern comparison also helps Adams in seeking out an Egyptian culture of imperialism (on the European sense of a *mission civilisatrice,* see the essays by Clifford, Pletsch, and Ryan in 23:4) and signs of Nubian acculturation. It is, perhaps, the effects of

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dominance and the ways of justifying it, even more than measurable extensions of power, that give the comparative study of imperialism its fascination.

ABOLITION. The abolition of slavery seemed in the nineteenth century one of the glories of modern history, so morally necessary and so inevitable that, while the institution of slavery itself has been a favorite subject for comparative study (in these pages, see Degler, 2:1; Finley, 6:3; Sio, 7:3; Klein, 8:3; Hill, 18:3, and most recently Graham on slavery in Brazil and the United States, 23:4), the reasons for its demise have been as much assumed as argued. But the question of why slavery should have been abolished presents special problems, particularly its very late abolition in Cuba, where its demise was long foreshadowed. In a model of careful comparative analysis, Rebecca Scott places Cuba in the context of general explanations and then turns to internal comparisons, which prove powerful, showing that slave and free labor could coexist and that neither technology nor Western values were necessarily irresistible forces for abolition. Her analysis also says a great deal about the transition to free labor and the means available to employers for continuing their control over the work force. That is the subject on which William Green and Nigel Bolland (see his article in 23:4) disagree, and their debate raises important questions about the characteristics of Caribbean society (addressed earlier by Mintz in 1:3 and Singham and Singham in 15:3), British policy (see Kratoska on British labor policy in Malaya, 24:2), estate labor (compare Richards, 21:4), and the proper framework for comparison itself (discussed by Bonnell and by Somers and Skocpol in 22:2).

CSSH DISCUSSION. Anthropologists write about their discipline with verve (see Bock, 8:3; Hammel, 22:2; Cohn, 22:2), shifting the affection and fascination once aimed at other societies to the field in which after all they spend most of their time. Sherry Ortner's lucid assessment, while noting the importance intemperate divisions have assumed among anthropologists in the past, takes on a remarkably eclectic tolerance for the contributions of different schools—and nonanthropologists will be struck by how much from other fields, ranging from history to psychology, anthropologists can make use of. Her article, in many respects an essay in intellectual history, accepts shifting fashions with equanimity, confident that each contributes to a common enterprise, while proclaiming a focus on action or praxis as the next step. Outsiders need to consider whether this would make anthropology too much like history, with its notorious limitations, or whether structural-functionalism in sociology, behavioralism in political science, or culture in literary studies and semiology have in practice been as similar to anthropology as they seem here—for the importance to other disciplines of these debates within anthropology is underscored by the central place (nicely reflected in this essay) that anthropology holds in the comparative study of society.

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